

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 10, 2005
(Approved April 4, 2005)

Chief Darrel Fournier called the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission to order at 1:04 p.m. in Room 438 of the State House, Augusta. Members present were Michael Albert, Jack Berry, Representative Patricia Blanchette, Chief Jeffrey Cammack, John Cannon, Chief John Dean, Representative Robert Duplessie, Chief Darrel Fournier, Geoffrey Maker, Harty Norris, Chief Jethro Pease, Charles Soltan, Leslie Wiles (for Bill Williams), Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (staff). Members excused included Jay Bradshaw, Senator Bruce Bryant, Representative Richard Brown, Art Cleaves, Edward Johnston, Senator Richard Nass and David Wacker. Attending today's meeting as guests of the Fire Commission were Alex McPhedran, Bob DiBona and Albert Godfrey, Sr. of Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters; Gerry Gay (Sanford), Phillip Dow (Bangor), Ron Green (Bangor), John Beatty (Portland-retired) of the Professional Fire Fighters of Maine; Chief Larry Willis of Hermon F.D.; Chief Jim Krysiak of Presque Isle F.D.; Chief Raymond Parent of Sanford F.D.; Chief Stephen Nichols of Kennebunk F.D.; Barry Norris of Union F.D.; Chief John Wolfe of Rumford F.D.; Steve Bunker of Maine 911 Bureau; Pamela Cahill-lobbyist for the Maine Fire Chiefs; Frank Johnson-Maine Employee Health and Benefits; and Billye Senecal- Program Coordinator of the Emergency Response Corps.

A motion by Mike Albert, seconded by Steve Willis, to accept the March 10, 2005 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Reports of Committees

Fire Commission members reviewed final plans for the Blaine House Conference on Emergency First Response scheduled for Friday, March 11th. Members also discussed the possibility of partnering with Maine Municipal Association in 2006 and allowing more vendors.

The Traffic Direction Committee reports they have agreed on the final draft and the proposed bill will be sent to the Legislature's Revisor's Office to be printed. The bill is expected to be referred to the Transportation Committee. Members thanked Chief Willis of the Hermon Fire Department for originally bringing the issue to the Fire Commission.

The Training Facilities Committee distributed a draft handout of a power point presentation for members to review and make comments. Members

discussed the draft R.F.I. (request for information) and the list of potential vendors. The Fire Commission agreed to finalize and distribute the RFI by March 25, 2005. Members further agreed to set April 25, 2005 as the deadline for vendors to respond to the RFI and to make a final selection at the May 2nd meeting.

Chief Fournier appointed the following members to the Elections Committee:

Jeff Maker-Chair
John Dean
Jack Berry
Mike Albert
Jethro Pease

Chief Fournier instructed the committee to seek candidates from among the various groups that comprise the Fire Commission and present a slate of officers at the April regular meeting.

The State Fire Marshal's Office reports the proposed rules on truss construction continue to proceed through the normal process. The rules are expected to mirror Bangor's ordinance on marking buildings using truss construction.

Jack Berry distributed a spreadsheet on training hours and service provided to members for their input and suggestions. A revised copy will be sent to members and discussed at the April meeting.

Old Business

The Fire Commission's bill, L.D. 10, asking for \$75,000 to conduct a study on health care for Maine's firefighters had a work session before the Criminal Justice/Public Safety Committee. The CJ/PS committee suggested the Fire Commission send out a R.F.P. (request for proposal) seeking bids for the study. Frank Johnson of State Office of Employee Health and Benefits agreed to assist the Fire Commission and made several suggestions to make the RFP clearer and more precise. Mr. Johnson identified three criteria the Fire Commission's RFP should include-

- 1) Population
- 2) Claims experience
- 3) Benefit designs- what level of plan or product are you looking for?

Members had a lengthy discussion on the different health care plans, the level of benefits to be offered, the age of eligibility (50 vs 55) and whether coverage would be limited to career firefighters.

A motion by Steve Willis, seconded by Harty Norris, for the Fire Commission to move forward with a Request for Proposal (RFP) to look at three health care plans with different benefit levels-one of those plans being similar to other state employee plans- with eligibility starting at age 55 , and coverage until Medicare eligible. The motion also states that a committee of the Fire Commission work with Frank Johnson from the State Office of Employee Health and Benefits to develop the RFP. The motion passed unanimously.

The RFP Committee members include Mike Albert, Jeff Cammack and Alex McPhedran.

L.D. 1021 “An Act To Implement Task Force Recommendations Relating to Parity and Portability of Benefits for Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters” the bill proposed by the Task Force to Study Parity and Portability of Retirement Benefits for State Law Enforcement Officers, Municipal and County Law Enforcement and Firefighters was next discussed. Fire Commission members were updated on the Task Force’s initial charge, their work over the last two years and the proposed bill, L.D. 1021. Members expressed concern that the Fire Commission had not been included earlier in the process. The discussion included the details and intent of L.D.1021 and members were told the goal of the Task Force was to be “all encompassing”- to include career, call and volunteer firefighters.

A motion by Jethro Pease, seconded by Pat Blanchette, to move forward with the concept of L.D.1021 “An Act To Implement Task Force Recommendations Relating to Parity and Portability of Benefits for Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters” and to send a letter to the Labor Committee expressing the Fire Commission’s support for the concept of the bill and to recommend the Labor Committee carry L.D.1021 over to the Second Regular Session of the Legislature. The motion passed with one member opposed (Charlie Solton) and one member abstained (John Dean).

Fire Commission members were briefed on the status of LD 464 (the Governor’s Budget bill) and the issue of allowing fire permits online. The bill was amended to allow for optional online fire permits in the Southern District and the unorganized territories. The cost of the optional permits would be \$7.00- \$6.00 would go to the State and \$1.00 would go to InforMe. Members questioned whether local communities could choose not to participate, how and who would

inform Fire Chiefs regarding the issuance of the burn permits and the reduction in the initial expected revenue projection.

The Fire Commission membership remains at twenty one members. The two vacant positions are Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters and the Governor's representative.

New Business

The Fire Commission will host the Legislative Night at the Ground Round Restaurant on Thursday, March 10th from 4-7pm. Position papers from the Maine Chiefs will be distributed to legislators at the event.

John Dean informed members regarding the change in the federal death benefit. The federal law criteria changed "killed" in the line of duty to "dying" in the line of duty making federal law closer to current Maine law. Members discussed the importance of informing Fire Chiefs regarding the required information needed when a firefighter dies, for example that an autopsy is required. Suggestions included that the SFMO offer a checklist and a packet of information for Fire Chiefs and post the information on the Fire Commission's website.

Members discussed posting the Fire Commission's minutes on the website prior to the next monthly meeting when the minutes are formally accepted.

A motion by Darrel Fournier, seconded by Mike Albert, to post the Fire Commission's minutes in draft form within two weeks of the monthly meeting and to formally accept the minutes at the next regularly scheduled meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

Chief Fournier introduced Billye Senacal from the Emergency Response Corps in Maine. Ms. Senacal distributed a brochure and made a presentation to members on her organization. ERC addresses specific needs including retention and recruitment, increasing available personnel, community service, engaging youth and aiding fire departments in public safety. Presently there are fulltime members in Holden, Winthrop, Durham, Windham and Phillips. ERC is part of AmeriCorps and offers scholarships to participants.

John Cannon reminded members of a Boston Globe series on fire fighting and suggested the Fire Commission might be interested in conducting a similar study. John also has extra copies of the article if members are interested.

Fire Commission members approved the following meeting schedule:

Monday, April 4 th	State House	1:00pm
Monday, May 2 nd	State House	1:00pm
Monday, June 6 th	CMCC	1:00pm

With no further business to come before the Maine Fire Protection Services Commission, Chair Fournier adjourned the meeting at 3:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan M. Pinette